

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR COLLECTION AND PACKAGING OF SPECIMENS FOR
INFLUENZA CULTURE
VDH KIT #9**

PLEASE READ INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE COLLECTING SPECIMEN

In order to comply with shipping regulations and ensure the safety of laboratory personnel and those involved in the transport of specimens, and to maintain integrity of the sample, the VT Public Health Laboratory will accept for testing only those specimens that are packaged according to the instructions below.

The kit should contain:

- insulated shipping container
- container(s) of refrigerant (e.g., Gel-Pak)
- labeled screw-cap tube of viral transport medium
- sterile dacron throat swab (with plastic rigid shaft)
- sterile dacron or cotton nasopharyngeal swab (with flexible aluminum shaft)
- specimen requisition form (Micro 220)
- metal inner container

Instructions

Storage:

Store tubes of medium in the refrigerator until used. Note the expiration date. Expired tubes may be sent or delivered to the laboratory for replacement. Discard if medium becomes cloudy, as this may indicate bacterial contamination. Store containers of refrigerant in the freezer until time for shipment. **Save the insulated shipping containers for shipment of specimens back to the VDH Lab.**

Collection of Specimen:

Due to the nature of the test procedure used for the detection of Influenza viruses and to obtain maximum recovery of the virus, only throat and/or nasopharyngeal swab specimens will be accepted. If it is not possible to collect both a throat and nasopharyngeal specimen, a single throat or nasopharyngeal swab may be submitted. The specimens should be collected within 3 days of onset of symptoms.

1. Print patient name and date of collection on labeled plastic tube.
2. **Throat swab** specimens: using sterile technique, moisten the dacron throat swab in sterile saline. Vigorously rub the tonsils, soft palate, and back wall of the lower pharynx with the moistened swab.

Nasopharyngeal swab specimens: using sterile technique, insert the dry nasopharyngeal swab into one nostril to the posterior pharyngeal area, hold the swab in place for 3-5 seconds to absorb secretions, rotate gently and then withdraw the swab.

3. Place the swabs into the tube of viral transport medium. Break off the top portion of the throat swab at the score line and bend or clip the flexible nasopharyngeal swab handle with scissors such that the cap can be placed on. **Place both swabs in the same tube of transport medium.**
4. Screw cap on the viral transport tube tightly.
5. Place labeled viral transport tube containing the swabs into the metal container provided. Screw cap on tightly.
6. Fill out the requisition form completely. **All information is required to ensure accurate and efficient processing of the specimen and reporting of test results.**

- Name and address of health care provider
- Patient's name and date of birth

- Patient's gender
- Date of specimen collection
- Travel history (testing will be delayed if not filled in)
- Source of specimen (nasopharyngeal, throat)

7. Wrap the completed requisition form around outside of metal container.
8. **Refrigerate specimen immediately. Do not freeze.**

Shipment of Specimen:

1. Specimen must be shipped cold, in the insulated container, to arrive at the laboratory within 2 days of collection.
2. Just before shipping, pack specimens in insulated container with frozen refrigerant. It may be necessary to pack crumpled paper or similar material (styrofoam noodles) around specimens to prevent breakage. Ship by fastest means (i.e. bus or courier) to the Laboratory as **time in transit should not exceed 24 hours**. For this reason, mail is not recommended.

The Laboratory will decontaminate and discard any specimen which is improperly packaged and may present a risk to personnel.

The specimen may be rejected if:

- Transport medium has expired
- Specimen is leaking
- No patient or provider name on requisition
- No date of collection

If you have any comments or questions regarding these instructions, please call one of the telephone numbers listed on the front of this form. Thank you.